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The Cut Flower QUARTERLY

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers Inc.

for growers of field and greenhouse specialty cuts

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From the PRESIDENT

Quality Really IS Job 1

Dave Dowling

Some of you may be recharged after the off season, while others may be ramping up from a slower "winter" season of greenhouse growing or endless planning for the 2017 season. Whatever the case may be for you and your flower farming business, work hard, and work smart, to make 2017 your best year yet.

We all know that working hard can entail long hours of physically, and often mentally demanding labor. Whether that means long hours of transplanting plugs and bulbs by yourself, spreading truckloads of compost or mulch as you prep beds and fields for the season, or managing a crew of workers to do the manual labor while you fine-tune the many aspects of a working farm, don't forget why you decided to be a flower farmer.

There are probably as many reasons why someone decides to be a flower farmer as there are lisianthus varieties. And there are a lot of lisianthus varieties lately. In the roughly 18 years that I have been a member of the ASCFG, I've visited well over fifty cut flower growers across North America. Many of these visits were on the tour day of a Conference or a Regional Meeting. Some visits were to consult with new growers just getting started who wanted to learn what to do, and what not to do when starting a cut flower farm. Many visits were done as a "field trip" during a Board Meeting. And others were to growers because I was in the area and I simply invited myself over for a visit.

Of all the growers I've visited, no two were the same. Some were similar, as in they were mega-greenhouse operations with dozens of workers, or they were small, one-person farms where the grower is everything from farmer, to mechanic, to designer, to salesperson, to financial juggler, to the collections department. But no two were the same. Like people, every flower farm is unique. While each farm has different product lists, marketing channels, and different financial goals, and a different story to tell, every farm should have the same goal when it comes to the end product. We should all strive to produce the absolute best cut flowers possible, at all times, without compromise. If we ever send poor quality products to the farmers' market, grocery store, florist, or wholesaler, we are just cheating ourselves. We are cheating ourselves by lowering our quality, lowering our value, and lowering our customers' expectations. We must do everything possible to prevent lowering anything in relation to the flowers we grow. We want to increase quality, increase sales, and increase profits.

*We must do everything possible to prevent lowering **anything** in relation to the flowers we grow. We want to increase quality, increase sales, and increase profits.*

Unfortunately, a few of the businesses I've visited over the years are no longer in business. Some because of hurricanes that wiped the farm off the map, some because of retirement, some because of poor planning, and some because they just couldn't get to that sweet spot called successful or sustainable.

There are currently at least five ASCFG events in the works for the remainder of 2017 and early 2018. One meeting currently in the planning stages will be held early next year. This will be for established farmers who have been growing for many years. Sessions will be constructed to answer those difficult business questions that come up, but are often brushed to the side and never dealt with, or worse, never even considered. It won't be a meeting about growing crops, or marketing, or the latest wedding designs. It will include sessions about growing and protecting your business, producing wealth and assets that have value for your retirement (yes, farmers may retire), and planning a succession strategy for you farming business. The ASCFG has been "growing growers" for almost 30 years. We felt it was time to offer a program to those members with established farms, to help them manage the business side of their operations. Look for more details about this meeting, and more in the coming months.

In the meantime, get in touch with another ASCFG member in your area and go visit their farm. And if someone is interested in visiting your farm, invite them over. You may be amazed at how much you can learn from each other, without even trying.

Dave Dowling is a Sales Representative and Warehouse Manager for Ednie Flower Bulb. Contact him at dave@ednieflowerbulb.com

Love Grows a Flower Farm

Jodi Helmer

Farmer, teacher, and business owner Jennie Love has built a blooming business

Jennie Love never planned to start a flower farm. After graduating from college with a public relations degree, Love took a communications gig in Philadelphia and planned to climb the corporate ladder. Things changed when she learned about an urban farm a few blocks from her apartment.

"I'd never even heard of urban farming," she recalls.

Love, who grew up on a dairy farm in central Pennsylvania, was drawn to the raised beds filled with fruits, vegetables, and herbs in the middle of the city. She started volunteering at the urban farm in 2002 and spent so much time tending to the city garden plots that she decided to start her own farm. She launched Love 'n Fresh Flowers in 2008.

"I wanted to focus on a high-value crop that I could grow in the city," says Love.

Starting Small, Blooming Large

Love 'n Fresh Flowers blossomed from a fledgling side business operated from a small garden to a thriving flower farm with two acres in production. Love grows over 200 varieties of fresh flowers from asters and garden roses to dahlias and lisianthus.

Almost all of the flowers grown on the Philadelphia farm are used in weddings. Brides adore the colorful blooms, which helps Love 'n Fresh Flowers book up to 70 weddings per year.

The lush, textural arrangements have also earned Love a reputation for her design work. In 2015, *Martha Stewart Weddings* magazine named Love one of the top wedding florists in the nation.

While Love appreciates the accolades—the farm has also been featured in the *New York Times* and the *Philadelphia Inquirer*—she has never sought out press mentions. Instead, she believes the attention stems from the dual focus of growing fresh, local flowers and using them in beautiful designs.

"I think the way the attention initially came to me was because there really was nobody else doing quite exactly what we were doing," she muses. "When I started out, there were plenty of flower farmers but not necessarily anybody trying to be florists in addition to being flower farmers."

Love is more than a farmer and florist; she is a passionate advocate for local flower farming. Her hope is that consumer demand coupled with an abundance of regional growers can help propel the industry toward a local, not global, supply chain.

To promote the industry, Love hosts workshops and events on the farm.

The first on-farm classes were held in 2010. When a seasonal bouquet workshop sold out—and the two other sessions she added sold out as well—Love discovered there was a niche market for hands-on classes. In 2017, the planned offerings include workshops to create wearable floral art, spring centerpieces, and peony arrangements.

"I want people to understand how the flowers are grown and understand why they should value locally-grown flowers," she explains. "Everybody who's ever come to a workshop leaves feeling gung-ho about locally-grown flowers so I know it's doing what it's supposed to do."

Workshops - Fun and Profitable

Although "workshop mania" started by accident, the classes have become a popular and profitable part of the farm.

"I wanted to build a workshop series that hopefully people would maybe come to more than one and we did. We have people that have completed every single workshop we've ever done," Love says. We hold them only in the spring because our spring weddings are a little slower [and] they're an excellent income source for the business."

In addition to teaching the public about flower farming, Love helps other growers master their businesses through intensive "master classes" that include The Designer's Cutting Garden, Weddings from Seed to Centerpiece, and The Business of Local Flowers.

"A lot of farmers don't understand that they're not farmers; they're business owners and that's a different kettle of worms than just being a farmer," Love says. "There are a lot of farmers out there who are just trying to farm and therefore are not really running a successful business and not making money and not understanding their marketplace. For me, it's such a passion to try to get people to understand that you need to run a business, not run a farm."

Farmers come from around the United States, Canada, and Mexico to attend the intensive seminars. Love admits the master classes have inspired some competition but she believes that there is room in the industry for everyone to blossom.

"The reality is there are a lot of weddings, a lot of flowers, and a lot of business to go around," she explains.

For Love, those business lessons have been hard won. Love 'n Fresh Flowers grew faster than Love anticipated—and faster than she was prepared for—leaving her scrambling to keep up. She hired a team, which fluctuates between four and six staff members, depending on the season, to help with administration, farming, and design work. As Love contemplates the future of the farm, which could include growing for wholesale accounts, launching online classes, and expanding her consulting offerings, she also takes time to stop and smell the flowers.

"Love 'n Fresh Flowers has really grown to be a very successful, very solid business," she says. "I couldn't ask for it to be anything more."

Jodi Helmer is a freelance writer in North Carolina. Contact her at jodi@jodihelmer.com

Postharvest Solutions Are Not Your Enemy

Gay Smith

When it comes to the production of meat, produce, and dairy, the most important aspects of quality are arguably freshness and flavor. Whereas with flowers, "The most important aspects of quality are 'freshness' and vase life, and these aspects depend on optimum postharvest handling." (Dr. Michael Reid, UC Davis 2009). So why does there seem to be a subtle trend away from interest in and use of postharvest solutions? Have you noticed it? Growers, sometimes supermarkets, and often wholesalers and retailers disdain floral chemicals as the best treatment for cuts. They describe water as "clear", "pure" or "clean". Huh? The tenacity of bacteria alone is one reason plain water is not an optimal treatment for the vast majority of cut flowers.

How did postharvest solutions become demonized, anyway? In the mid-2000s, organic produce was moving from fringe interest to mainstream and "story" became a trendy marketing strategy as consumers hungered for information supporting various products. Negative comments like this one from Kristine Wong threw a dark light on chemical use on flowers with her bristling alert: "The flowers in your typical supermarket bouquet… (are) likely tended by underpaid laborers exposed to harmful pesticides, preserved with chemicals…". (*Modern Farmer*, "A Flower-Farming Renaissance: America's Slow Flower Movement" 3/28/16).

Ouch! Stories completely out of sync with the feel-good aura of flowers. Instead of focusing on negative aspects of imports, why not share details about social programs offered by farms including child care, education, and health clinics? Why not pepper the story with information on the use of IPM, worm culture, and composting techniques to reduce chemical use, enrich the soil, and protect the land?

Before I dig my hole any deeper, let me say that I celebrate the uptick in domestic production, and agree 100% with conscientious chemical use. But it is possible that we are missing the point by demonizing flower chemicals and imported blooms rather than focusing on improving the products we offer. Organic and Fair Trade labels on food products motivate me to buy, but when it comes to flowers, bloom performance is my motivator. According to Caitlin Dewey, (*Washington Post* 2/9/17), Millennials (18-34 year olds) were the driving force behind the 209% sales increase of organic food between 2005 and 2015. Our industry needs to attract the same millennial buying power by offering floral products that not only please, but also last.

Maybe eschewing postharvest solutions is a conscious attempt at distancing domestic from imported blooms. It's easy to blame imports for the attrition of domestic production. There is no question that flowers went global like so many other U.S. industries. The Andean Free Trade Preference Act (ATPA) in 1991 and the Andean Trade Promotion and Drug Eradication Act (ATPDEA) in 2001 were enacted as trade preference systems by which the United States granted duty-free access to a wide range of exports (including flowers) from four Andean countries: Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador and Peru. Enacting the treaties helped these countries fight against drug production and trafficking by expanding their economic alternatives. In the pre-euro years of the 1990s, the exchange rate of the Dutch guilder was rising fast against the U.S. dollar, but the wide array of auction flowers available continued to make purchasing attractive. As import volumes increased to North America and Europe, Colombian and Ecuadorian flower producers realized the globalization of flower production. They responded by embracing proven postharvest practices, adopting uniform grading standards, and renewing and modernizing variety selections, all to provide consistent quality.

Still today, many U.S. growers, wholesalers, and retailers view handling procedures and products as a cost rather than a way of offering quality to stimulate repeated purchases; an insurance policy against the myriad of actions that rob days from consumer vase life. The meteoric rise of event planners is the newest group to have an aversion for using floral products. An oft-mentioned reason is "The blooms have to last only as long as the event.", but that mentality does not jive with the trend of encouraging guests to take home arrangements, which they gladly do. It is almost certain that flower photos are included as part of Facebook postings as the event is relived online in following days. Flowers that have flopped the next morning give a negative overview of ROI.

Some of us have spent our careers encouraging growers, bouquet-makers, wholesalers, florists, supermarkets, and big box stores to consider and employ best practices. Why? The sheer beauty of flowers may not be enough to capture our savvy consumer's attention. Longevity is the most compelling yardstick used by consumers to decide if their flower purchase was worth the money spent. Satisfied customers are repeat buyers.

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The Farmer and the Florist

A Friendship Based on Good Business

Ellen Frost and Laura Beth Resnick

The relationship between the farmer and the florist is at its best, a dynamic collaboration, and at worst, a mess of miscommunication. In upcoming columns, we'll explore a range of our own issues that result from the bond between a grower and designer. We hope that our stories (good, bad, and ugly—and sometimes things do get ugly) will be helpful to you!

The Farmer

I got into this business because I love the work. It's all about being outside, growing green things, and rolling with the seasons. It was only after my first season that I realized I love selling flowers, too.

There are all kinds of ways to sell, as I'm sure the ASCFG membership shows. Florists, wholesale, retail, market, farm stand, design—the trick is to know which channels best suit your personality. You've got to enjoy selling through your channels and feel motivated by their challenges, because selling is much of what farmers do.

Having positive relationships with our florists cheers me up, connects me to the community, and helps me enjoy my work even more.

About half of the flowers on our two-acre farm go to CSA, classes on the farm, and DIY brides and grooms. The other half go to florists. We structure our entire week around florist sales, and I spend a lot of time sending availability lists and emailing back and forth with designers. The work suits my personality; it facilitates meaningful collaborations, and connects me with a world of beauty and artistry.

To illustrate how selling to florists works at Butterbee Farm, join me for a regular Wednesday harvest in August…

Jascha and I are in the field on our Maryland farm, cutting dahlias. Every time we harvest the dahlias, we do a lot of deadheading, keeping only the absolutely perfect blooms that could be photographed up close in a bridal bouquet. Local Color Flowers, a florist in Baltimore, is expecting our dahlias and more around 10:00 a.m. Since we don't have a cooler, we harvest every morning and send the flowers straight to their destinations. Our proximity to the city (about 20 minutes) makes it possible to spread our deliveries out over the week.

Selling to florists requires attention to detail, management of logistics, and good communication. I enjoy those challenges, which is why at Butterbee Farm, we focus on growing flowers for designers. There are other channels that I don't enjoy so much: farmers' markets, for example, require bursts of social energy, resilience against super-cold or super-hot days, and good spatial orientation. Not my strong suits!

The relationship is unique between a farmer and a designer. It is, first and most importantly, a collaboration. We have what the designers need to do their jobs;

without us, they would have no material to design with. And without them, we would have no way to get our flowers into those glorious bridal bouquets.

Local Color Flowers and I constantly cultivate that creative relationship, even during the rush of harvesting. After cutting a bucket of red, orange, and dusty pink dahlias, I catch a glimpse of blue in the middle of the field. On closer inspection, it's ageratum, looking better than I expected this late in August. I pull my phone from my back pocket and text Ellen: "Do you want two bunches ageratum? 15-inch stems." Seconds later, she replies, "Sure. Got any yellow?" I run-walk to the craspedia nearby; there are about three bunches of useable stems. I tell her as much. "I'll take them," she writes.

Laura Beth Resnick

Ellen Frost

It's this kind of farmer-florist interaction that makes my heart sing. When I have something on the farm that will make weddings more beautiful, personal, and artistic, then I've got a greater purpose! I often text Ellen from the field, and we deliver to a few other florists who also like this level of communication.

Two hours later we've harvested buckets of basil, dahlias, ageratum, craspedia, cosmos, eucalyptus, goldenrod, scented geranium, celosia, and zinnias. Jascha takes a sip from his Nalgene. "All done?" he asks. I check my list. Everything looks good. We pack the buckets into the truck, and I text Ellen "Leaving now." I crank up the air conditioning and turn on Morning Edition.

Twenty minutes later, I roll up to the studio. A sign on the door reads "KNOCK LOUD"— they must have the a/c on, too. I "knock loud," and Ellen welcomes me in. Irene and Stacy are prepping vases for the day, but they break to help me unload. "Yellow!" Irene says when she sees the craspedia. "It's for that wedding at the Visionary Art Museum," Ellen says. "That's going to be perfect," Irene says, and goes to get some empty buckets to trade.

We all chat while Ellen writes a check. "How's the farm?" Stacy asks, and I tell her there's a frog named Gunther who lives in the porta potty. We named him Gunther because he's white-ish, like his namesake's hair in Friends. "Cute!" she says.

I try to make sincere connections with our florists whenever possible. The florists who enjoy our conversations can add "great relationship" to their mental lists of reasons to buy from me. Having positive relationships with our florists cheers me up, connects me to the community, and helps me enjoy my work even more. Plus, I feel that these positive individual interactions can ripple out to influence the greater community.

"What do you have next week?" I ask Ellen. "A huge blush wedding," she says, and we all groan. Blush is nice, but it's been all the rage for a few too many years. I say goodbye and hop back in the truck, sliding the check into the glove compartment. The rest of the day holds weeding, washing buckets, and twining dahlias, and I'm looking forward to it. Delivering to a florist is, for me, just the right motivation to work hard on the farm!

The Florist

Hey ASCFG! My name is Ellen Frost and I'm the owner of Local Color Flowers. We are a floral design studio in Baltimore, Maryland. About 65% of our work is wedding and event work while the other 35% is single orders, subscriptions, and classes. We started out in 2008 with a simple idea: if you were getting married around Baltimore, you should be able to purchase your wedding flowers locally. As we enter our 10th year in business, we have provided flowers for nearly 600 wedding clients.

At Local Color Flowers, we know that having great relationships with farmers is critical to the success of our work. With that in mind, we work hard each day to nurture those relationships. In 2008, we started buying from three farmers: Bill Harlan from Belvedere Farm, John McKeown from Locust Point Flowers, and Mel Heath from Bridge Farm Nursery. We are so proud to say that now we source from about 35 farms within 100 miles of Baltimore. Our relationships depend on good communication, timely ordering, timely payment, praise for the product when it deserves praise, and feedback when it needs some changes. It means planning

Our relationships depend on good communication, timely ordering, timely payment, praise for the product when it deserves praise, and feedback when it needs some changes.

events together with our growers, scheming together, learning together, taking walks together, and sometimes even having a break from one another. In this column we're hoping to address issues like communication styles, marketing, collaboration, competition, burnout, and logistics, from the perspective of a grower and a floral designer.

As a florist who uses only local product, I know I am unique in the floral design world. I know that my experiences don't represent all florists' experiences. However, I do believe that the relationship that Laura Beth and I have built over the last 5 years highlights some of what is possible when farmers and florists work together with a common goal: getting more local flowers into the hands of more people.

We also know that as hard as we try as a company and as individuals, we fall short in our relationships with the growers sometimes. Too many last-minute orders, too many last-minute changes, untimely email responses, untimely payments, bad attitudes, stress, and exhaustion all impact our working relationship. In future columns, we'll discuss these failures in addition to our successes.

Counting the Digitalis

Nathan Jahnke, John M. Dole, and Ingram F. McCall

Department of Horticultural Science, North Carolina State University

This project was supported by Ball Horticultural Company through their generous donation of plant material. The authors would like to thank Ben Bergmann and Peyton Daly for their assistance with growing and harvesting the cut flowers.

Digitalis, also known as foxglove, is common in many gardens. Its long spikes and spotted throats provide great architecture and color to any landscape or arrangement. We usually think of them as a biennial from seed, but Darwin Perennials, part of Ball Horticultural Company, has recently released three cultivars in the Foxlight ™ Series: 'Plum Gold', 'Rose Ivory', and 'Ruby Glow'. These hybrids boast new vibrant colors and flowers that face outwards instead of hanging down like traditional types. This trait allows the observer to easily see the speckled throats and stunning colors.

With these traits in mind we wanted to test out the hybrids' potential as cut flowers. Ball recommends vernalizing (providing a cold treatment) the plants to guarantee flowering so we also tested three vernalization durations before planting.

Experiment Setup

Vegetative cuttings were received in December 2015, placed under mist and rooted for six weeks. The young plants were bulked (grown larger) in 4-inch pots until the end of February. Plants were then precooled at 50°F for one week.

To test vernalization durations, plants were then placed in a 45°F cooler for 4, 6, or 8 weeks. At the end of their cooling period they were moved to a greenhouse for one week, followed by one week outdoors under shade cloth before planting.

Number of stems produced, and stem length were recorded before stems were tested for vase life using the following treatments:

1) Hydrator only (4 hours)
2) Holding preservative only (2 days)
3) Hydrator for 4 hours followed by holding preservative for 2 days
4) Tap water only (as a control)

Floralife Hydraflor 100 was used as the hydrator at 1.0 ounce per gallon, and Floralife Professional was used as the holding preservative at 1.3 ounces per gallon (the rates listed on the packaging).

Rooted cuttings ready for bulking.

Vernalization treatment.

After treatment, stems were placed in tap water and held at 68 ± 2 oF under approximately 200 foot-candles of light for 12 hours per day. The vase life for each stem was recorded. Termination point was typically when 50% of the flower(s)/florets on the stem were brown, wilted, drooped over, etc. This study helps us provide accurate information how long these flowers will last and how to increase vase life.

Results

The length of vernalization did not make a difference in the number of plants that bloomed, or the overall production. All plants flowered regardless of the vernalization treatment. With that in mind we can recommend the shortest treatment of 4 weeks at 45°F to ensure blooming.

'Plum Gold'

Averaged one stem per plant with an average length of 14 inches. Using a preservative increased the vase life from 11 days to 14 days

Notes: Vibrant purple/red color with spotting in the throat. Stems also had a purple/red coloration. Foliage seemed to hold up better to vernalization treatment.

'Rose Ivory'

Averaged one stem per plant with an average length of 14 inches. Preservative doubled the vase life from 5 days to 10 days.

Notes: Unique flower shape, color and speckles. However, flowers lost color and often failed to open during postharvest. Stems also exhibited drastic response to gravity if not held upright.

'Ruby Glow'

Averaged two stems per plant with an average length of 15.5 inches. Preservative did not statistically increase the 8-day vase life.

Notes: Flowers were ruby on the outside with a dusty yellow/orange throat. Although the flowers were smaller than the other hybrids, the stems were long, straight, and strong. Stems also had a purple/red coloration. Plants exhibited lush, green leaves below flowers.

Conclusions

These hybrids definitely have some potential with their vibrant colors and reasonable vase life. 'Ruby Glow' and 'Plum Gold' would be the best two cultivars to start with as they produced higher quality stems and had better vase life than 'Rose Ivory'. By the end of the summer, 20 to 40% of our plants died. This is most likely due to the large amounts of rainfall that kept our fields saturated. *Digitalis* does not like to stay wet. Raised beds may be the best option if growers want to try these new varieties. More work should be done to determine the exact number of days needed for vernalization, and if a higher vernalization temperature can be used. For more information on Darwin Perennials and the Foxlight series visit darwinperennials.com.

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Paeonia

General information: Cut peonies (*Paeonia* hybrids) have a long commercial history in the U.S., dating back to at least 1884 when Amasa Kennicott sold cut peonies to Chicago florists. At one time there were approximately 4000 acres (1620 h) of production in the Midwest. Today, the peony is a widely-grown field cut flower from the east to the west in Zones 3 to 8. Alaska has carved out a niche for producing peonies from June to September, after production in the lower 48 states ends. Cultivars vary in color from white to red and from single to heavily double. Cut flower production uses mostly double-flowered types as they have more petals, which require more time to open.

Stage of harvest: Harvest stage is quite important for peonies as the buds open quickly. The opening of peony flowers is separated into six stages:

1. Tight bud with little true petal color showing
2. Tight bud with true petal color showing
3. Soft bud
4. Very soft bud
5. Almost open with petals not reflexed but still curving inward towards the center
6. Fully open

Growers need well-trained harvesters who are familiar with the stages and with the optimum stage of harvest for each cultivar. In general, white-flowered cultivars are the first to open, pinks are intermediate, and red the slowest. The younger the buds the longer the vase life, but there is a limit as buds that are too immature will not open. Besides bud diameter and firmness, various other parameters may be used to determine the optimum harvesting stage including sepal opening angle, sepal color, and petal color showing. In a recent study, it was found that 'Pink Hawaiian Coral', 'Red Charm', 'Edulis Superba', 'Red Magic', and 'Sarah Bernhardt' should be harvested at stage 1. 'Duchesse de Nemours', 'Taff', 'Sorbet' and 'Monsieur Jules Elie' should be harvested at stage 2. 'Kansas' should be at stage 3, and 'Karl Rosenfield' at stage 4.

Peony flowers open quickly and thus, may need to be harvested up to three times a day if temperatures are warm. The first harvest is usually made early in the morning. Flowers must be cooled rapidly after harvest to prevent opening during storage and shipping. Do not delay putting flowers in the cooler as they will continue to open after harvest. The maximum time between harvest and placing flowers in the cooler is 2 hours; the warmer the temperature the shorter the time period. On hot days, flowers should be brought to the cooler every few minutes.

Expected vase life: In Kansas, annual trials from 1992 to 2000 documented that the vase life of freshly harvested flowers from 28 cultivars ranged from a low of 4.4 days to a high of 8.7 days.

Grower, wholesaler, and retailer treatments: After harvest flowers should be immediately cooled to 34 F (1 C), any surface moisture allowed to dry, and stored

dry. Flowers should be kept cold as they are graded and bunched. Foliage, flowers, and stems need to be dry to prevent botrytis development. In general, flowers hydrated during this process are more likely to open during shipping, which will greatly decrease quality and increase the likelihood of botrytis.

After dry storage, the stems should be recut and held in a hydrating solution (pH 3.5 using citric acid or commercial hydrator) at 70F (21C). A holding solution should be used after the hydration of the flower stems. Sucrose pulsing can also be used to accelerate bud opening. For example, Korean researchers determined that 20% for 24 h provided the optimum solution uptake and fresh weight when flowers were pulsed with 0, 5, 20 or 35% sucrose pulses for either 12 or 24 hours.

Storage and shipping procedures: Cut peonies tolerate storage much better than most cut flowers if kept cold, 32 to 34F (0 to 1C), and dry. Experimentally, a vase life of 4.7 to 8.6 days, depending on the cultivar, was obtained after 4 weeks of storage. Flower buds should be held in plastic-lined boxes. Shipping should be as fast as possible and boxes should have ice packs to keep the stems cold. Flowers may look wilted after storage, but generally will rehydrate and open well. Keep in mind that while the tissue surface should be dry, the humidity level in the cooler should be high to prevent excessive desiccation. See introductory chapters for more information.

The Holy Grail for cut peonies is the development of a system for long-term storage, due to the fact that peonies have a relatively short flowering season at any one location, and higher prices are obtained for out-of-season peonies. Longer storage of up to 12 weeks is possible, but vase life and flower size will be reduced and the likelihood of botrytis is greatly increased. The question of hydration is debated. To prevent the flowers from opening and botrytis developing during storage, most growers do not hydrate the stems. However, other growers obtain excellent results by hydrating at 32 to 35F (0 to 2C) for 1 to 2 hour after harvest, then sorting, grading, bunching, and allowing the foliage to air dry before packing in boxes for storage.

Ethylene: While peonies have little or no ethylene sensitivity, STS increases the vase life.

Foam: No information is available.

Comments: Through cultivar selection, the harvest season can be lengthened. Unfortunately, a warm spring will cause all cultivars to flower quickly. Interestingly, these large flowers also work well as dried flowers, with the medium pink to red flowers working the best.

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ASSOCIATION OF
Specialty Cut Flower Growers
RESEARCH FOUNDATION
Research • Growth • Results

Cut Flower Growers' Concerns: Results of the Survey

Chris Wien, ASCFG Research Foundation

What are the most pressing issues for cut flower growers? Your response to the survey sent out in early January was swift and enthusiastic, with 141 replies in 3 weeks. The intent of the survey was to provide the ASCFG Research Foundation with information on what research we should be fostering, but the responses also gave a useful picture of the constraints growers face.

The first set of issues centered on production factors, where continuing interest in new varieties topped the list, followed by plant establishment techniques. Management of nutrients, soils, insects, diseases, and weeds scored almost equally in importance, and many commented that they considered these as a group and difficult to separate. Several growers expressed interest in more information on organic management methods. Use of supplemental irrigation was of special importance for growers in the Southwest, and this year, also in the Northeast.

Here's a look at the scoring, ranked with ten as top score.

Production Factors, ranked to 8

• Production and postharvest information on new cut flower varieties	6.19
• Young plant establishment (propagation to planting)	5.24
• Nutrient management	4.79
• Soil management	4.70
• Insect management	4.42
• Disease management	4.01
• Weed management	3.48
• Water/irrigation management	3.16

Management Factors, ranked to 7

• Economics (improving the profitability of individual crops and the farm in general)	5.51
• Harvest efficiency (harvest to processing)	5.17
• Postharvest management	4.52
• In-field season extension	4.40
• High tunnel (unheated) management and production	4.38
• Greenhouse (heated) management and production	2.44

Among the management factors, which tended to be more general, optimizing "the bottom line" was most important for those who responded. This was true for both experienced and new growers, and points out the importance of publicizing case studies in the *Quarterly*, and expanding the Mentor Program to help individual growers. Sharing of techniques and tools to improve the harvesting and postharvest handling of our many flower crops is also a top priority, as well as more widespread knowledge of efficient postharvest practices. This indicates that the long-awaited publication of *Postharvest Handling of Cut Flowers and Greens* will fill a big need.

Few of the members responding produce flowers in heated greenhouses, but interest in management techniques in field and high tunnels is high.

In addition to filling out the ranking tables, some correspondents also added specific comments. Here's a sampling:

- ***Soil and nutrient management are complex subjects that go a long way toward dealing with insects and disease. It's fun to talk about new varieties, but everything depends on the soil.***

- ***All of these are important issues but since each farm varies, not all are equally relevant based on other farms' experiences. In general, we are most interested in cultural requirements, growing results (yield, etc.), and postharvest treatment. Next, disease, insect, and weed management.***

- ***We need improved genetics in zinnia to help with obvious issues. Also, we need a replacement species for the zinnia window altogether. We rely too much on this species. Worse, one breeder of one variety of the species.***

- ***The business of making flowers profitable is of most interest to me. All pest and disease issues, fertility, etc. are very important and make me a better grower. However, many of those issues are location specific and less universally applicable. It also seems that there is more veg info available to growers on these growing topics; topics specific to flowers is of most interest to me.***

- ***Whatever will make me more profitable. Being a small grower is a tight place to be. Efficiency reigns king.***

- ***Most of the information shared from the Trials is wide reaching, but the specific information seems to be aimed at growers selling to the public or retail florists. As we only sell to wholesalers or distributors, specific information about durability or shelf life in the wholesale chain would be useful. We sometimes struggle with how long we can hold product in our cooler before selling to the wholesale customer. Standard vase life figures are not that beneficial to our operation.***

- ***Just beginning a second season, so some of what I learned last year is just beginning to sink in. I anticipate doubling my production this season without adding labor. Crop selection and marketing for my area are critical economic decisions that I need to make, as well as being able to increase my efficiency in all phases of production.***

- ***My farm is not a hobby. All things I can do to grow better without getting sucked in to every new fertilizer, pesticide, or tool are very important to me. Lean farming is how we can make this venture profitable and sustainable.***

- ***For me, at this time, it is all about the economics. All the information I'm gathering now is to inform my business model, and make the farm healthy economically.***

- ***Our interconnected world brings new insects every season that can destroy the marketability of our products, yet we want to control the damage without them totally disrupting the ecology. High tunnel use and management allows season extension and some climate control to add some predictability in production, but present their own challenges as well***

- ***New varieties are important because competition at the farmers' market means that older varieties are soon being grown by other vendors, too. Postharvest management is one way to offer higher quality cut flowers than competitors may be offering.***

- ***We need more straight-up sharing about business management. Hardly anyone talks about numbers. If I can't earn a living doing this, I have no business treating it as my primary work. We can't keep putting flower farming forward as a viable business option if we don't study this.***

- ***It's all about economics, not pretty flowers. Working less and making a better profit are important goals.***

- ***Best harvest point practices will generate more usable stems per planting. Spacing experiments with different varieties will also help with general guidelines/expectations for own testing. As an example, Chris's spacing research on sunflowers and lisianthus was very helpful to increase production per square foot.***

So now what? The responses to the survey provide a guideline to our ASCFG directors on the health of our industry, and the topics that need to be addressed in our meetings and publications. The survey results also will guide the Research Foundation on where research emphasis should be placed in future. Thank you, members, for sharing your ideas!

"Zinnia Meltdown" to be Investigated

Several cut flower growers have reported the occurrence, and sometimes recurrence, of what has come to be called zinnia "meltdown", a condition in which zinnia stems can become mushy and soft, and petals may exhibit a type of burn. Questions about whether this is caused by rainy, humid conditions, soil-borne disease, or variety selection are almost as numerous as potential cures: different postharvest solutions, variable pH, or temperatures in the cooler.

The ASCFG Research Foundation recently awarded plant pathologist Dr. Fulya Baysal-Gure of the Dept. of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences at Tennessee State University $5000 to study this issue. Using information gathered from surveys of ASCFG members, Dr. Baysal-Gurel hopes to first determine the distribution of the disorder by geographical location, cultivar, month and year when the problem was observed, as well as field strategies such as seed and water treatments or sanitation practices. If you are asked, please participate in this important project.

Donate to the Research Foundation and Get Mugged!

The ASCFG Research Foundation is funded solely by donations from ASCFG members. It's up to you to keep projects like John Dole's postharvest projects or this new zinnia study operational. Even if you can contribute only $25 or $50, your support is essential.

Donate today
http://tinyurl.com/jm7agfm
and we'll send you a
mug for your desk!

The Certified American Grown Council approved a new variation of the Certified American Grown logo that gives Certified farms the option to feature their state as part of the brand and labels. A formal request of consideration was sent to the Certified American Grown Council from the board of the Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers. Certified American Grown will be issuing the state version logos to current Certified farms upon request. For more information, please contact Andrea@AmericanGrownFlowers.org

NORTHEAST

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont

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Escape to New Zealand for Flower Farm Fun

Winter can be pretty grim here in Maine. Over the last couple years I hatched a plan for a January adventure to expand my flower horizons. I follow farmer florists all over the world on Instagram and reached out to several in the South Pacific to see if I could finagle a visit and a tour or something along those lines.

I sent a message to Jeanine Wardman at Verve in Marlborough, New Zealand, and she quickly responded that she'd love to have me.

I hustled through my seed ordering and planning that usually stretches through the month of January, and set off for different hemispheres January 8th. After 30 hours travel time I arrived in Wellington for a couple days to recover from the flight, and look at some plants. Wellington is breezy, and I arrived right in the middle of summer, greeted by municipal plantings of succulents, tall New Zealand flax plants, agapanthus, impatiens, lobelia, sweet peas, and delphinium, as well as palms and ferns. This combination of heat-loving and cool-loving plants struck me as quite a juxtaposition.

Wellington has a lovely botanical garden with many roses, and an herb walk, as well as a conservatory full of begonias, orchids, staghorn ferns, and tropical water lilies. My farm is in growing Zone 5, so hedges of bay and rosemary were novel and awe inspiring. A Google search tells me the growing zone in this region of New Zealand is in the 9-10 range. I think it varies widely depending on elevation, which explains why no one could really give me a straight answer on zones. Nights are cool. I have to admit, I am easily confused by temperatures in Celsius.

I hopped a ferry from Wellington to the South Island and Picton. As the boat navigated the sounds on our way into port I ogled the greenery of the landscape. Mixed shrubs and ferns reached just down to the water's edge. The view reminded me of a movie backdrop with such saturated colors.

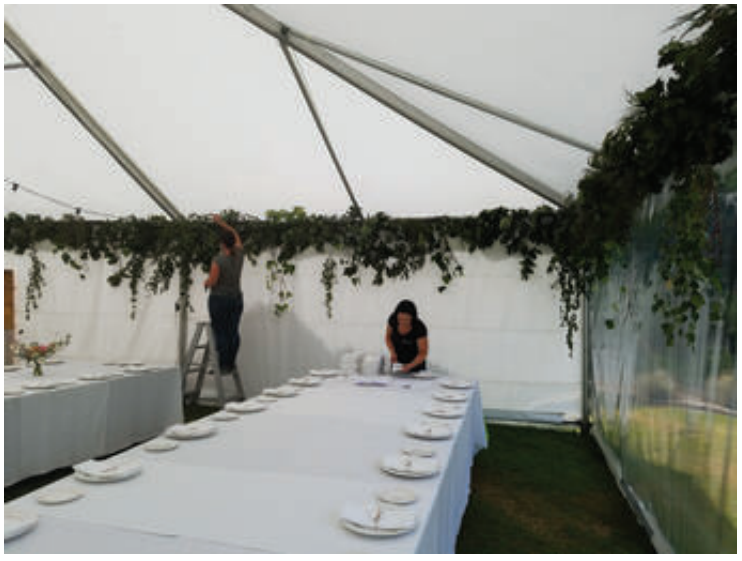
From Picton I traveled by bus to Blenheim, a small city in the middle of New Zealand's wine country. I saw many grapes, cattle, sheep, olives, cherries, and plums from the road. The bus driver explained that folks are "re-swamping" some low-lying wetlands that have been overtaken by willows for wildlife habitat. The dead trees remained as skeletons, looming on the flat land between the hills.

Margaret Hammond, Jeanine's shipping manager and harvest crew leader, fetched me from the bus station on her way to drop off a couple boxes of flowers they were shipping to florists in other parts of New Zealand via refrigerated truck. Margaret is a pistol and we were quickly talking about flowers and adventures between errands on our way to the farm. Margaret explained that next day was a wedding delivery, so I should be prepared to hop in the van early to get on with the greenery install.

That evening Jeanine welcomed me into her studio as she worked on the personal flowers for the next day's wedding. There's something very special about witnessing someone going through familiar motions and emotions prepping for work you know well. I think we farmer florists often find ourselves isolated on our own farms and in our own studios, and it felt amazing for me to perch on a stool and watch as someone else reads their production notes and pulls buckets from a cooler, or snips a couple more branches to add that final flourish.

The next morning Jeanine and her team had loaded up three vehicles with flowers, greens, vessels, and bouquets, and we were off to a seaside vineyard estate venue to make some floral magic. My assignment was to assist Kelly Hammond, Verve's farm manager, in an epic greenery drape where we zip-tied branches to the 3 sides of the tent rails. I love greenery, so this was right up my alley. We mixed together local branches of several types of oak, manuka, ivy, and two types of birch.

The other ladies were scurrying and creating some bright and simple centerpieces they built on site in jam jars. I appreciated the clean look to the tables. I have not done much on site designing in my wedding work. What a shot of adrenaline!



Jeanine composed some large urns for the entrance to the tent. As the person in my business often making decisions and directing others, being directed and helping out felt like a nice vacation already. I don't do too many big installs, so this felt like an adventure wedding. I loved expanding my skill set.

The next day was Sunday and that is a quiet day at Verve, but Jeanine let me tag along on a corporate delivery she makes at Cloudy Bay, an upscale winery and tasting room. Jeanine is a great match for the vibe there because they want garden-y but clean and refreshing flowers. We delivered a vase of *Monarda citriodora* and some very nice cosmos for the restrooms. Jeanine and I also tasted some wine after we set up the flowers. I'd say winery accounts are pretty good weekly customers to have!

The next two weeks brought regular field work, harvesting cosmos and *Scabiosa atropurpurea*. Before this trip I had resolved to grow few or none of both of these as they seem to take ages to harvest and are difficult to keep up with. Now maybe you all already know these tricks, but Jeanine taught me to harvest the cosmos before it opens, just as you can see a petal. The blooms open beautifully in the cooler and how nice to have buckets full of perfect cosmos, rather than blooms that are too open and about to shatter!

The "scabbies" are a big building block in Verve's product offering, but Jeanine prefers to cut epic stems, maybe with the primary bloom having gone to pod already, with the next flush just opening, and still plenty of buds attached. This made so much sense to me, as usually I would cut individual stems for what seemed like hours and end up with just a couple bunches. I'm definitely adding these tricks to my toolbox and giving these crops another go on my farm.

At Verve, most flowers are sold to floral designers and shops miles and miles away, so the stems will be in a box out of water for a day or two as they go by truck to their destinations. This means that Jeanine generally must hit that sweet spot in the harvest window of mature enough that the stems won't shrink and wither when they are dry, but also young enough that they still have days of vase life after they are hydrated. I found this a bit challenging to achieve as I am used to selling all my blooms hydrated in water and direct to the designer or consumer. I realized that I had come to enjoy the flexibility and freedom there. I can use (and relish!) stems with personality that might break or not rehydrate if shipped, as well as fragile items, open blooms, and short stems.

Jeanine's style is a garden-y wildflower look, so she grows a lot of achillea, scabiosa, mint, sweet peas, limonium, lysimachia, cosmos, eryngium, foxglove, helichrysum, ammi, and daucus. She had dahlias and lisianthus growing, but their bloom time is more February-March. I really liked seeing her tweedia growing in the tunnel, as that is a flower I have bought from California but never tried growing. She also had some very impressive thalictrum that really adds elegant airiness to bouquets and designs.

Achillea is an important element for field production.

Tweedia in a New Zealand tunnel.

I think if I had to choose one theme for my whole trip, it would be my fierce love for recognizing familiar plants, systems, rituals, and routines while seeing vistas, species, ideas, and norms that were completely new to me.

Two of the other visiting farmers at Verve during my time there were Juliah Thrift and Alex Larkin. Juliah used to be farm manager at Silver Lake Farms in Los Angeles. Alex has worked for Sas Long at Floralora Flowers in Ontario. The three of us became a little troupe for a couple weeks, checking out the farmers' market in Blenheim and going on hikes. Our farmers' market in Portland, Maine is very bustling and full of great products, but I really enjoyed visiting a market with local figs, pine nuts, hazelnuts, walnuts, apricots, olive oil, and a bit of citrus. We had fun shopping, but saw that cut flowers weren't a big part of the offering at that market. We saw some lilies and some mini callas.

I had a blast weeding dahlias and chatting with these folks about flowers, farming, work-life balance, wedding work, favorite blooms and textures, and which colors are shuffling to popularity.

As I worked alongside Jeanine, her crew, and the visiting farmers, I reflected on my setup here in Maine. I have a great crew and some managers among them. Our farms are complex, and I think sometimes in the heat of the season, we communicate in a bare bones way, more of a need-to-know basis. I realized when I was working at Verve that I really appreciated knowing a bit more about what we were working on, why, and where exactly those stems were destined. It made me want to be clearer about those things with my crew. My constant aspiration for my farm is to create smoother systems for us to work within, allowing us to spend more headspace on growing, selling, and designing with beautiful floral material.

I think if I had to choose one theme for my whole trip, it would be my fierce love for recognizing familiar plants, systems, rituals, and routines while seeing vistas, species, ideas, and norms that were completely new to me. I loved that foxgloves are weeds in New Zealand and grow easily mixed among wild ferns at the edges of the bush. I grow eucalyptus on my farm, but it never gets taller than 5 or 6 feet before winter comes, but next to Jeanine's cottage, a gum tree towers.

Now I'm back home, seeding seeding seeding, thinking about my workflow, and getting ready for a bountiful 2017. Warm wishes to you all from Maine, and happy planting!

MID-ATLANTIC

Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia

Lisa Ziegler
The Gardener's Workshop
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I've just returned from another great ASCFG grower meeting: Portland was great! I so enjoyed meeting folks that I have known only through social media—having a smile to go with a name is great. Be sure to watch the videos from this meeting in the Members Only section on the ASCFG website. It's almost as good as going!

After hearing about garden roses and the no-till method I think I have been tempted to try them both! Isn't that the great part about meeting with others that do what you do? Their enthusiasm rubs off on you and you just can't help yourself! Am I going to plant roses? Not sure, but it is surely exciting to consider it.

As I am currently trapped indoors pounding away on a new book project, I am watching my cover crops growing like mad in this crazy weather. I am so thankful for them because they give me hope that spring is coming. I decided to share what helped me find my way to work cover crops into my little farm.

Small Farms Cover Crops

The benefits of cover cropping far outweigh the head-scratching that goes on when trying to figure out how to work them into a small farm rotation. For me the magic moment came when I realized that having the seed on hand at all times helped a lot, and to grow only what was easy for me. My way may be simple, but it has allowed me to include some cover cropping on my small urban farm where space is always at a premium. It has added tons of organic mass to our soil and more.

Good reasons to grow cover crops: they provide habitat and food sources for pollinators and other beneficial insects, add organic matter to the soil, and some are allopathic and can even added nitrogen to the soil.

I use an Earthway Ev-n-Spreader to plant all my cover crop seed. I cover the seed by shallow tilling or raking. Covering the seed increases germination greatly. I allow Mother Nature to water.

Cool-Season Cover Crops

Cool-season cover crops were perhaps the easiest for me to work into the rotation at first. Only a third of my beds are planted through winter in a cash crop and they provided a way to protect rest of the garden. It is best to plant a fall cover crop when it has enough time to sprout and become established with good top growth before the first frost, typically 6-8 weeks before the first fall frost.

Winter Rye

Winter rye is a great cover to plant later in fall after the last cash crops are done producing. It can germinate at lower temperatures (34 degrees) and can survive brutal winter weather. It starts growing again in spring when temperatures reach just 38 degrees. This brute seems to match my always-late planting habits and greets my spring hopes of more growth when little else does.

One consideration for winter rye is what is going to be planted in the given area come spring. Rye is known for its allelopathic effects on some weeds. This means that the decomposing rye produces a toxin that can inhibit future germination (hooray!). While I consider this a great benefit because I plant transplants only in spring and summer, others that direct seed in spring could run into problems. I get great weed control in the garden the summer season following winter rye grass.

I tend to plant winter rye in the area I am planning for my second summer planting of annuals. This gives sufficient time for the rye to mature for the maximum organic mass before incorporating into the soil. I plow it under as the heads are beginning to develop, and then leave the garden for 2-4 weeks to while it starts to die off and begins to decompose. I follow with preparing the field as normal. Rye takes longer to decompose than crimson clover.

Crimson Clover

I like to plant crimson clover as early in fall as possible. It gives its best performance when allowed to grow and cover the soil before the first frost. Because it is in the legume family it will also add some nitrogen to the soil in addition to organic mass. If you have chickens, beware: they adore clover, but know they can pulverize a planting quickly in fall as it is getting established. Controlled exposure to the patch can work for chickens and their peoples.

I tend to plant crimson clover where the first summer annual planting is going the following season. To reap the full benefit of nitrogen and organic mass from the clover the target to incorporate it into the soil is when it is at its prettiest- in full glory bloom. This tends to happen early spring for us so a perfect fit for the summer planting. Turning the clover into the soil by tilling only has worked well for us. It decomposes quickly and is leaves the beds ready for planting in just a couple of weeks.

Winter Rye

Crimson Clover

Buckwheat

Warm-Season Cover Crops Buckwheat

A great summer addition to the garden is buckwheat because it is so quick. It grows from seed to bloom in about 30 days. It feels as though it grows literally in the blink of the eye. This is the cover crop that taught me to always plant a torn-down bed immediately if there is not a cash crop ready to be planted in the next few days.

As soon as the bed is torn down, mowed and tilled, I grab some buckwheat seed, scatter, and cover it with soil. Before I know it, the buckwheat has germinated and is making a beautiful canopy of vegetation and will soon be blooming. I will repeat buckwheat plantings if cash crops are not ready to go in yet.

Because it grows so quickly it makes an excellent weed suppressor; it outgrows most weeds. It should be incorporated into the soil when it is in bloom but before it sets seed. Other benefits are that the stems are hollow so it is easy to turn into the soil with a shovel, and it breaks down fast.

Reap the benefits—make cover crops a part of your garden!

SOUTHEAST

Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee

Val Schirmer
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Hi, everyone! In thinking about a "hot topic" for this quarter's report, I turned to the feedback you gave me in January, when I sent a note to the Region asking what you'd like to do less of, more of, and try out in 2017. It was great hearing from you! Two themes came through loud and clear:

1. You're looking for more hands-on experience in floral design, which we talked about at the Portland board meeting, so stay tuned on that topic.
2. Workshops! Lots of you said you want to try your hand at doing either more of, or your first ever, on-the-farm workshops.

Workshops sound like the perfect topic for this time of year, so I thought I'd share what we're doing at Three Toads Farm around workshops. I know many of you have more experience at this than we do, but maybe there's an idea here that might be of interest to you, too, and I hope it will inspire some of those who are really wanting to give them a try.

As I mentioned in my Winter report, this will be our fourth year doing workshops. Every year we figure out something new to do. There's just no way to figure everything out in year one, year two or probably year five! For example, last year we decided on our schedule at the beginning of the year and posted all of the dates, times, prices, and descriptions on our website. Each of the workshops sold out. Okay, pretty good idea. This year, we posted everything BEFORE the holidays, so the workshops could be given as gifts—turned out to be another good idea!

I totally realize that each of us is different in what we do (grower only, wannabe grower, farmer-florist, etc.) and where we grow (backyard, small farm, big farm, borrowed land), but I can tell you that people WANT to see what you're doing. They want to come to your place and experience the sights, sounds, and scents we take for granted. Don't feel that your flower space or farm isn't good enough for people to want to come to, and they'll pay you to do that.

First Things First: Figure Out What You Can Do

When will your fields look most abundant? When will you have the time to prepare for and then host a workshop? How will you promote it? And the biggest question, how much should you charge?

The first year, we charged $50 for our 90-minute Field to Vase workshop. We were pretty excited to get 10 people to sign up. We cut all the best of our specialty flowers and foliages, conditioned them overnight in the cooler, and lined them up down the big table in the greenhouse, like we were expecting company. We gave a tour of the farm, explained about what we grow and how we do it, talked about how we got started, Elizabeth (the most talented Toad by far) showed everyone how she makes her big farmer-florist arrangements, and then we turned everyone loose. Letting them choose the flowers and foliages they couldn't keep their hands off was very cool. And we helped and coached each person, so they would go home with their own "to die for" arrangement.

Take Photos, and Do Your Best Not to Forget!

We had invited our local small-town newspaper to come to our workshop and before everyone took off, she asked them all to get together with their arrangements and the flower fields in the background. What a great touch! That's something we do now, every time. Then we send the best photo to the group the next day, thanking them for coming to the farm and saying if they'd like to post it on their social media, to please feel free.

Try to take photos of participants as they work, take photos of the flowers you've prepared. Also take photos of mothers and daughters, sisters and sisters, and friends and friends who come together. You're creating a wonderful— perhaps even priceless—memory for each of them.

Fast Forward to Today

We LOVE doing workshops! First, it makes us feel so good about what we do. It inspires us to see our guests get so excited when they create their own masterpieces. We've found that people who come to the farm feel a special connection and typically become so loyal that they're our best ambassadors. Also, it's really nice having that extra cash come in.

We've expanded beyond just summertime Field to Vase workshops, trying to think of ideas, based around what we're already doing, to add a special, or "first dibs" workshop. For example, we force spring bulbs for a big high-end event in Lexington the first weekend in March, called the Blue Grass Trust Antiques & Garden Show. We start forcing heirloom, always fragrant and typically multi-stem or double spring flowers in deep six-packs, potting them up in containers (like concrete bowls and urns) to sell as spring bulb gardens.

Last year, we decided to offer a new Spring Bulb Gardens workshop, giving our guests "first dibs" on all of our bulbs before we started potting them up for the show. Turns out, there's something magical about getting first dibs on anything. Think about what you're doing and add in a special workshop, giving people exclusive access to whatever it is you're doing.

Be Sure to Charge Enough

Yep, that's always the challenge! Limiting the number of people who can attend helps a lot. There's something magical about posting "SOLD OUT" that makes people crazy to come to your next one! We limit all of our workshops to 12 attendess, unless we've added a spot for the high-bidder at a local fund raiser.

It's going to take time to stop what you're doing and clean up your grounds or greenhouse or barn to host one of these. We've found we actually get more people coming when the workshops are priced higher.

Promote and Promote Again

We use social media and our website to promote the dates, including photos and a description of what our guests can expect. Recently, the host of our local Saturday morning gardening show on AM radio asked us to send him a listing of our 2017 workshops … dang! I didn't think of doing that before. Be sure to invite the local press to come cover your first workshop of the season, letting them know it's a great photo opportunity (which every newspaper is looking for). Share photos afterwards on social media, too.

When someone signs up, send them an email, thanking them for their registration. Seven to ten days before the workshop we send a group email, talking about what to wear, what to bring (clippers and their favorite vase or container), how to get to the farm, and the names of everyone who's coming.

How Do People Sign Up?

Payment always accompanies a registration, and we politely say that we regretfully cannot refund cancellations. We take payment on our website, and we also take phone calls and emails, using our trusty Square to send an invoice and enter credit card info over the phone.

We also offer gift certificates. After all, don't we all want to make a hero out of anyone who gives one of our workshops as a gift—or two, or even three? Thank goodness for people who buy something so generous for people they care about.

Here's Our 2017 Schedule

Spring Bulb Gardens, Sat., Feb. 25, 10 a.m. to noon, $140. This is the one where we give folks first dibs on our 3,500 forced spring bulbs.

Field to Vase, Tues., July 18, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95. For this we cut the best of all of our specialty foliages and flowers, holding nothing back, unless it's reserved for a wedding or special event. This is the first one we schedule, because by July, we should have TONS of flowers!

Field to Vase, Mon., July 31, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95.

Field to Vase, Tues., Aug. 1, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95. Since we do a lot of work to cut for and clean up the greenhouse for our workshops, we decided this year to hold a few back-to-back.

Field to Vase, Tues., Aug. 22, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95. By now, we're really glad to be holding the workshops in the cool of the evening.

Field to Vase, Wed., Aug. 23, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95.

Field to Vase, Tues., Sept. 12, 6 to 7:30 p.m., $95.

Special Dahlia Workshop, Tues., Sept. 19 3 to 6 p.m., $250 Last year we offered this first-ever workshop for a Bluegrass Conservancy fundraiser and it sold out within an hour. It's the only event we hold at our home (where this whole journey started) and allow our guests to cut their own dahlias for their arrangements.

Flower School, Tues., Nov. 14, 9:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., $365. This one is all about forcing glorious bulbs for the holiday and beyond. Guests get first dibs from our premium-size amaryllis bulbs, specialty paperwhites, and spring bulbs to create three different projects, and then we help them create a big arrangement with winter greens and our magnificent white Oriental lilies. We include lunch at a local specialty restaurant and a notebook packed full with our growing advice.

Hopefully, this might give you some ideas on timing, pricing and something unique to try. There's no time like 2017 to give it a go!

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NORTH AND CENTRAL

Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming

Mimo Davis Duschack
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Here in the North and Central Region, a group of Ohio members has been very busy hosting three workshops over the winter and spring months. Sadly, the Great Plains Growers conference cut flower track in St. Joseph, Missouri was cancelled due to an ice storm. Both Jeanie McKewan and Barb Lamborne were the scheduled presenters.

Here on our farm: do you remember the first time you dived off a diving board? Remember how nervous you were? I mean, anything could happen! You could hit your head on the board; a belly flop would really hurt. I remember standing on the edge so scared my toes curled, clinging to the end of board as if my life depended on it. The sheer force of my heart beating so hard and fast was just enough to feel off balance and that I could just topple over. I had friends cheering me on "YOU CAN DO IT!", "COME ON!" "1,2,3 GO!"

I have that exact feeling now as I prepare to leave my secure full-time employment, and return to world of agripreneurship! This moment is what we have been working toward since the very beginning of the farm in 2012. The first two years we paid all farm expenses from our full-time jobs. Year three the farm supported itself. Each year the farm income has had a healthy increase in income from the year before and our accountant says we are moving in the right direction. Now, entering our fifth season, it's time to jump off that diving board!

We've considered the ramification of this bold decision, including navigating how to find and afford health insurance, and we've decided that it's time to jump. I'm willing to bet the farm! I'm passionate about our high quality product. I believe in the power of the flowers and my customers who buy them! What I do know for sure is that our farming business has outgrown me being able to manage my full-time employment, our growing customer base, and the needs of the farm.

In other words, my off-farm job was getting in the way of my growing the farm business. Urban Buds can no longer sustain itself or grow without a chief operating officer! The choice facing me is to stay secure and keep the job, or downsize the farm. If you know me the latter is just not going to happen!

I farmed full time for ten years when I ran WildThang Farms. Ten years was a long run for a sole proprietor and I learned lots of lessons, especially about the pitfalls of crop failures, negative weather events, and the stress of relying on the flowers as my only source of income. I believe that some of the challenges I faced in the 1990s and early 2000s can be mitigated by staying on top of crop rotations, soil health, and variety diversification. I am returning to fulltime farming later in life, but I get only one life so I am going for it in all of its beautiful bounty.

I decided to write about making the leap so publicly because I think others maybe working toward the same goals, and honestly it's the only thing on my mind! Other than global warming. Happy harvesting!

SOUTH AND CENTRAL

Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana,New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah

Rita Anders
Cuts of Color
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Spring came a little early this year, and I sure took advantage of it. While I'm a realist, and know we could still get a late freeze, or several of them, I'm sure hoping we won't because I put out thousands of plants.

After a couple of really cold weekends, which had me praying hard, winter had been pretty much otherwise non-existent. We were lucky here on our farm but I know of others who weren't so lucky, losing thousands of cool annuals. I check my Weather Channel app constantly, and with no bad weather coming, we just kept planting.

I have seeded thousands of flowers, bumped them up into larger cells, and when they're big enough, moved them out into the garden to make room for the next round. Would you believe that we were planting out zinnias and sunflowers right after Valentine's week? I could wait, according to the frost tables, but I'm just going to my chances and I see cold weather is coming, we will be pulling lots of Agribon out onto the garden.

This past January I held a farm day, and was so pleasantly surprised that so many of you came. I hope everyone's questions were answered, and that you were able to meet other growers in our Region. We had members from Arkansas, Louisiana, and Texas. I was really hoping that you all could make relationships

with growers close to you, and build friendships to help you grow each other. I was touched by those who attended, and then sent thank-you cards and emails. Even those who couldn't make the meeting because of other commitments took the time to thank me for creating the meeting, and that was really nice as well.

The weather cooperated, and we had a nice day out in the sun. I apologize for it being kind of last minute, but I was dealing with a sick mom in the hospital, and it was tough to make a decision any sooner. My mom is finally turning the corner and getting better each day.

At the end of February I attended the "Deep Dives" meeting in Portland, Oregon. It was good to get away for a visit with other growers in different parts of our flower world. Thank you to West and Northwest Regional Director Lennie Larkin, who pulled together a great program, packed with a full array of growers.

You might wonder why I would want to go to a meeting so far away, how could growing in that region teach me anything? It doesn't matter where the meeting is held; I always come away having learned something new, or seeing a different way of growing a flower I'm already growing, or having a look at a new crop.

I'm going to touch on a few of the speakers, but I encourage you to check out the Members Only section of the ASCFG web site, where videos of the presentations are posted.

Tony and Denise Gaetz from Bare Mountain Farm gave a great presentation on no-till farming. Tony has been posting YouTube videos, available through his web site, on several topics you may find useful. Currently there are 35 videos available; if you subscribe to his site, you'll be notified whenever he loads another one.

Fallon Shea, Garden Valley Ranch, Petaluma, California, spoke about growing roses. She was so full of energy and joy that it spread throughout the room. She is one little bundle of flower joy, so infatuated with flowers that she can see the beauty in a dead tulip lying on the ground. She has a different way of looking at life.

Fallon came to Garden Valley Ranch at the age of eighteen, with green hair and all, and talked her way into being hired. Now she manages the huge rose gardens there. Look through the presentations for pictures of some of her favorite varieties.

Ray Gray, formerly of King's Mums, gave an excellent presentation on mums for cutting. I was especially interested because I've grown mums for two years, and needed some help in figuring out some things. I took cuttings from my first-year mums, dipped them in rooting hormone, and stuck them into plug trays. When they were good and rooted, I transferred them to 4" pots until July, when I planted them in crates in the same house as my winter dahlias.

They all grew great, and bloomed, but not when I wanted them to. I was stuck with too many fall colors in December. What I figured out from Ray is that mums need short days to initiate bloom. Since I had them in them greenhouse with the winter dahlia crop getting 14 hours of extended light, they didn't want to bloom early enough. So this year I'll plant all the fall-colored dahlias in a different greenhouse where they won't get the extra light, and I'm still going to plant the reds, creams, and green mums in the same greenhouse with the dahlias, because I like the blooming with the December flowers. Ray also told me it was good to cut them all back now, and take whatever cuttings I need. He also said to pinch them back again in June.

Mums also need support because many of them get tall. From my experience this last year, they were really nice and tall, and I thought they would be fine without the netting, but I was wrong. Once the blooms started sizing up and got some weight, they starting leaning and lying on top of each other. You don't want this to happen, because they curve and it's hard to work with crooked stems.

Some points Ray made were that the decorative cushions and pom-pons are great sprays. Spiders and quills are incredible as buds or disbuds. Spoon mums are great for bouquet work.

Our great President, Dave Dowling, and Janet Foss, a long-time grower, and one of the nicest, most genuine people you ever want to meet, gave talks on bulbs, and some of their favorite crops. Find these in Members Only.

The highlight of the evening was Speed Dating with the Experts. While I'm no expert, I was paired with Southeast Regional Director Val Schirmer. We moved from table to table every ten minutes, and attendees took turns asking us questions. Everyone got to speak and we all learned from each other.

Tuesday morning we boarded the bus to tour Peterkort Roses and Oregon Flowers. I've ordered roses from Peterkort for my wedding work, and it was good to see where they come from. I am also infatuated with roses, so want to see how they grow them. It wasn't what I expected. They grow a lot of plants, which were somewhat dormant this time of year, in these channels filled with coconut fiber.

Peterkort also grows amazing freesia, Italian ranunculus, anemone, and a few other flowers. All their crops are grown inside huge gutter-connected bays that go on and on. The freesia were three feet tall, and the ranunculus were 30 to 36 inches. They do not grow like that in Texas! At least, not for me.

Oregon Flowers was the second greenhouse operation we toured. Massive gutter-connected bays of greenhouses, all climate controlled. We saw houses and houses of tulips and lilies. They have a machine, imported from Holland, that takes pallets full of crates filled with media and bulbs, and places them neatly down the rows, which are as long as football fields. No human ever has to lift a crate. Once they're placed, support netting, drip lines, and water heater lines are dropped into place. When the crop is finished, the crates are removed by the machine, the soil is dumped and sterilized, and the crates are refilled and replanted. All the work is done by automation. A real sight to see. I used to ridiculously think I planted a lot of lilies. What I plants is a drop in the bucket in comparison.

After the grower meeting, I spent the rest of my time in Portland at the ASCFG Board of Directors meeting. We were very busy planning all the rest of the activities for this year, and into 2018. We're working on some great projects, and information will be released as they are finalized. The food in Portland was amazing and the hotel staff was exceptional.

In closing, I would like to share a story. As I saw waiting for my flight, I was sitting next to this nice older lady. She was leaving a message for her husband to pick her up at the airport because she wasn't feeling well. I was worried she was having heart issues, so when she got off the phone, I asked if she was okay. She said she was fine but was coming down with a cold. She was milking it with her husband because she didn't want to ride the bus. We got to talking, and when she asked why I was in Portland, I told her it was for a flower meeting. She pleasantly spoke of flower growers she had met on the Metro on the way in. She even remembered it was our sweet ASCFG Secretary Linda Doan, and her husband Roy, as well as Jane Hudon of Colorado.

It's a small world, and so great hear what a nice impression some of our grower flowers left on other guests in Portland.

WEST AND NORTHWEST

Alaska, California, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington

Lennie Larkin
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The ASCFG Takes Portland

As I sit down to write this, I'm still struggling to recover from information overload after the ASCFG grower meeting, and then the Board meeting in Portland this February (and I'm writing this late, well after deadline, so let's just say that a fair amount of time has gone by). Let me tell you, it was a whirlwind. One of those lose-your-voice-up-till-wee-hours-scribbling-notes-on-napkins kind of a week.

I was amazed to see how many new conference attendees we had—a huge group of maybe 30 people out of the 90 people in attendance. I knew this was the case going into the week, so when I arrived early at the hotel I of course started trying to spot them and say hello. This is usually easy. At past conferences in, say, Grand Rapids or Fort Worth, you could tell a farmer from a mile away. Not so in Portland! In the restaurant or lobby or hallway I found myself lurching towards countless young couples in beards and flannels, ready to introduce myself and ask if their anemones had started to emerge, only to stop myself abruptly when I realized that every person in sight looked like this and none of them were in fact associated with the ASCFG. After all, we were in *Portland*. Needless to say, it was a different kind of conference hotel experience, one where the coffee was fair trade and gluten-free pastries abounded.

The day of sessions itself was packed to the brim with presenters new and old (to the ASCFG, people!). I've heard it said that this was one of the sexiest lineups yet.* We tried hard with this conference to respond to demand we've heard out there in the

pipeline about new topics and some fresh presentations. I for one was pretty pleased with how it all turned out. Here are just a few of my favorite tidbits from the day.

Poppy Davis wowed the crowd on many levels with advice for long-term financial planning. On the newbie front, she told us that farmers just starting their businesses can and should save their receipts from the first moment they put any work into their farm. Even if they don't make a sale for three years, they can hold on to all those years of receipts and claim them later. For those in the room that were farther down the farming road, she offered a plethora of wisdom for the long haul. This quote stands out to me:

For many farmers and ranchers, the richer you get the poorer you feel. You are constantly improving the value of your land and paying down long-term debt, but you never have any more cash. That's called getting rich the old-fashioned way. Sometimes after a while the farm operation that was building wealth by operating at a profit starts operating at a loss. Then the temptation is to take some of the long-term wealth the business created over the years and put it back into the business. That's how farmers go bankrupt and lose everything.

She further elaborated on the difference between being low on cash and rich in long-term assets.

If you have operating income greater than operating expenses but you spend the rest of your cash paying down debt and buying assets and expanding your operation, you are going to be "cash poor", but you might be on the road to building real wealth.

Things to begin to think about, no matter where we are in our farming paths.

The hallway after Poppy's talk with filled to the brim with people hungry to pick her brain. This won't be the last of her involvement with the ASCFG; we'll be reeling her in to present on more topics of finances over the long haul of farming.

Janet Foss is skilled in so many areas of growing that her name gets thrown around in relation to topics across the board. "Need a speaker on X,Y, or Z, see if Janet's available". "Having trouble growing X, see how Janet grows it." We asked her to speak on "Shoulder Season Crops", as this is a topic that eludes many new growers, and Janet has got the shoulder season down.

We all know that in the first few years of flower farming, you're rich in flowers for three months and then by the time you get your bearings to sow more successions, it's too late. Janet hit home by stressing this no-brainer yet

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often impossible-to-internalize fact: If you already have your customers in July, you might as well keep going with sales through October.

What is your farm potential, she asked? How many flowers can you reasonably pick in a day and fit in your van? The point of season extension, she said, is to "keep going with selling as far into the season as you can. When it stops being profitable (a delivery for $50 that costs more than it brings in), it's time to take a break."

If there's a month where Janet doesn't have anything to sell (unlikely these days), she'll look to her local area for inspiration to see what's growing that she could be cultivating on her own farm and selling. Drive around the neighborhood! Visit the local botanical gardens! Think outside the box!

I'm sometimes scared that we'll all end up growing the exact same crops and lose variety in the market. This advice hit home for me, both for extending the season and our frame of mind when it comes to crop selection.

Denise and Tony Gaetz from Bare Mountain Farm blew my mind (as always) with their application of theory to actual practice in their fields. Specifically, they focused on their transition to no-till farming on their property over the past number of years. In addition to detailing their processes of both crimping down cover crop (and planting right into it!) and occultation using heavy tarps, they really hammered in the fact that no two fields are alike (much less two farms). There's no one-size-fits-all recipe for soil management. You can have different soil types that require different strategies located just feet from one another. As Tony and Denise dive deeper into trialing techniques that are gentler on their soil, they continue to see improvements in their plant health, microbiological activity, and general feasibility of systems on their farm. What a duo to watch.

I hope you'll all check out recordings of these presentations in the Members Only section of our website. Thanks to everyone who made it out to the conference!

** From the mouth of Lennie Larkin, circa late 2016.*

CANADA

Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, New Brunswick, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, Ontario, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Saskatchewan

Janis Harris
Harris Flower Farm
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First of all I would like to say a big "thank you" to the Association and current board for adding a Canadian region. The local flower movement is blooming in Canada and we are so excited to have board representation! The Canadian growers will still look to their local region for growing and timing, but now also have a collective group to voice the unique hurdles that international borders create.

I will put on my Canadian geography teacher hat and give you a brief overview of Canada. We will start in the east with the beautiful Maritime Provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Labrador, and Prince Edward Island, known for rich red soil and lupine growing wild! A great destination spot for summer travel and I'm sure you all have heard of Anne (with an E).

As we move west we enter the higher populated provinces of Quebec and Ontario. All of Canada is considered bilingual but Quebec has a large French-speaking population. Montreal and Toronto are the large metropolis cities. Mississauga is the home of the Ontario Flower Growers Auction, a Dutch-style flower auction. There will be an opportunity to visit this in August. Prince Edward County has a happening local/100km scene and it is a great tourist destination. The Niagara region is full of great wineries as well as many great flower farms.

The Prairie Provinces are Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and Alberta. Growers there are TOUGH! Most are in zone 4 and lower but are still determined and able to grow with a very short growing season. Most land parcels in the prairies are thousands of acres filled with grain crops. I am so glad that there are growers who are able to have small farms and making flower farming work in the prairies.

British Columbia is on the west coast. It is everything the west coast is supposed to be—tempered winters and lush growth because of lots of rain. It is Canada's Pacific Northwest Growers in lower BC are usually among the first to have outdoor production in the spring and can continue longer into the winter.

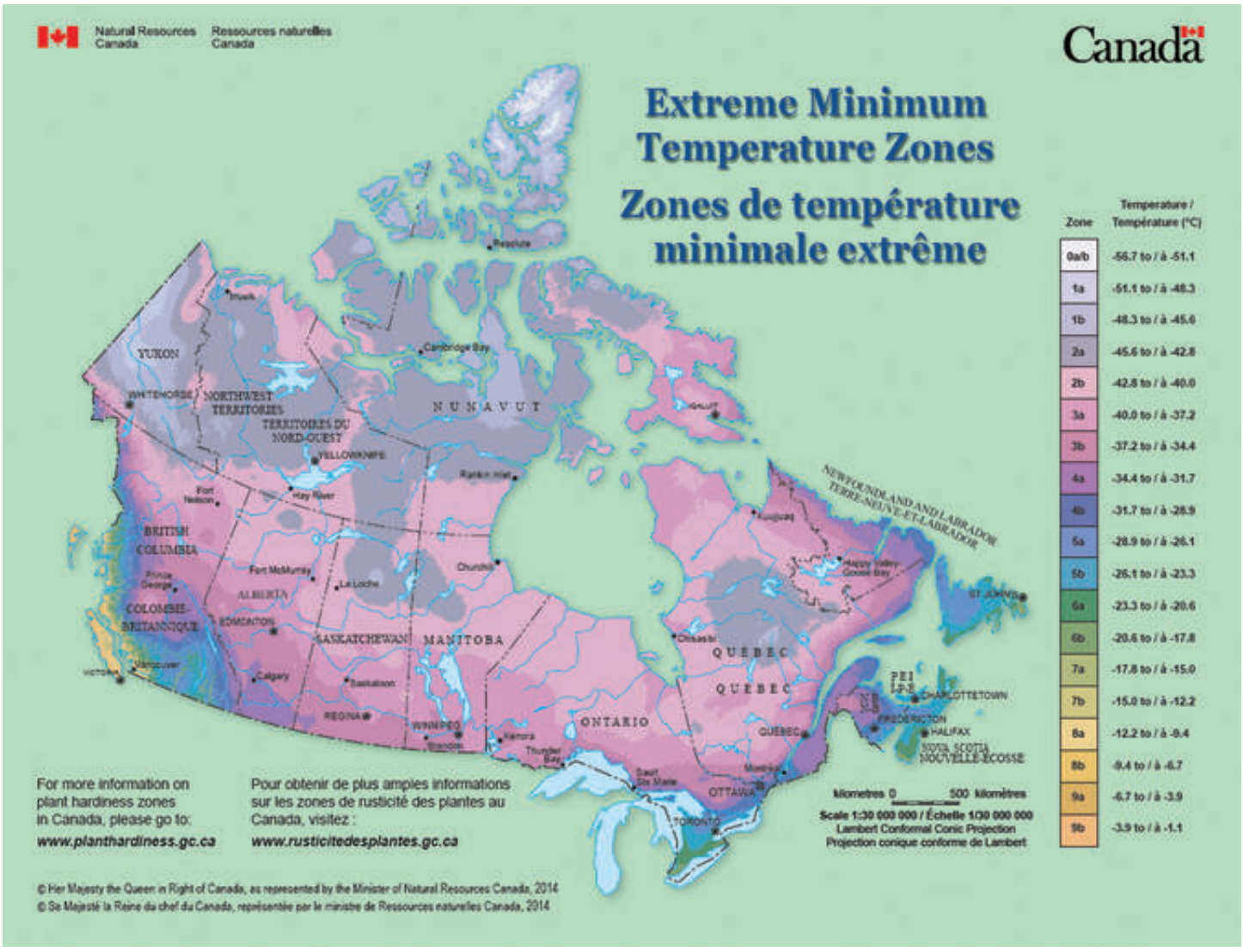
The Northern Provinces are Nunavut, Yukon, and Northwest Territories. I don't know of any growers up there but I give them credit if they are. The Alaskan growers amaze me!

When I say I am from Canada I always hear "Wow, how cold is it there?", "How long is your season?" and occasionally "Do you live in an igloo?". Our hardiness zones range from coldest in the north, 3-4-5 in the lower part of the prairies, 5-7 in southern Ontario and the Southern Maritimes, to 7-8 in the west coast. I am in southwestern Ontario. Our zone is 6a. St. Thomas is straight north through Lake Erie at Cleveland. We normally count on our last frost date around May 10 and the first frost around October 15.

Back to my flower farmer hat. I am excited to join an awesome group of "'flower geeks" like myself on the board. I hope that in my three-year term I am able to make a mark for Canadians in this association. We are strong and mighty and love growing amazing locally-grown blooms for our customers. The Canadian membership is growing just like the rest of the new members. I hope all members will enjoy my articles and learn something from a north-of-the-border flower farmer.

In August there will be a tour of some great Canadian flower farms. Start planning for your quick summer getaway. The presentations focus on growing, designing, and business. A great lineup is already in the works. If you plan to drive, there will be an opportunity to do a drop in visit at some other farms along the route. Remember to get your passport ready and if the exchange rate stays the same your money will go further on Canadian purchases. The host site is only a 25-30 minute drive from one of the natural wonders of the world, Niagara Falls. This is a great chance for a much-needed break in the busy season. We are really excited to have the ASCFG come to visit Canada.

Please be sure to follow our farm on Facebook (www.facebook.com/harrisflowerfarmpasturedpork), Instagram (harrisflowerfarm) and our website www.harrisflowerfarm.ca. Also make sure to introduce yourself at ASCFG events. I'm excited to take a bigger role in this awesome association!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Meet the ASCFG's Newest Members

Julie Abrera, Beaumont House Design, Berryville, VA
Mary Altermatt, Mountain Meadow Farm, New Milford, CT
Ronda Anderson, Blue Meadow, Fort Scott, KS
Chris Auville, Harmony Harvest Farm, Mt. Sidney, VA
Sadie Beauregard, Foothills Flowers, Everson, WA
Natalie Beverage, Auburn, CA
Monique Bilbo, Southern Season, Bush, LA
Steven Boot, Richmond Hill, ON
Fiona Buckley, Bozeman, MT
Jeanne Cadden, Caddenco Design & Construction, West Hampton, NY
Tom Captein, Carmichael, CA
Blake Carlson, Cedar Falls, IA
Lee Carlton, Goldenrod Gardens, Elk Park, NC
Maria Castle, Seaford, NY
Melissa Cipollone, Stonewood Farm, Millbrook, NY
Helen Cocran, Holden, LA
Heather Coughlin, Cave Springs, AR
Jill Coutts, Ashton, MD
Karen Coyle, Coyle Farm Karen's Cuts, Churchville, NY
Courtney Crouch, Lawrence, KS
Kristen Dolloff, Humble Bee Flowers, Berwick, ME
Semia Dunne, Providence, RI
Alli Edwards, Sol Y Sombra, Hygiene, CO
Rajani Flynn, Manville, NJ
Carl Galloni, Jamestown, NC
Adrianne Gammie, Marilla Field and Flora, Berlin Heights, OH
Maida Goodwin, Northfield, MA
Maddy Green, Innisfree Herb Garden, Crozet, VA
Kelly Gregory, Marysville, CA
Bridget Haines, Farm On the Point, Southampton, NJ
Wanda Haken, Nenana, AK
Sarah Harding, Buggy Road Farm, Whitefish, MT
Christina Heiner, Ronan, MT
Viv Herman, Sweetbriar Gardens Studio, Keystone, IN
Julianne Hinson, Kannapolis, NC
Erin Howe, Red Maple Flowers, Inman, SC
Maryse Hudon, Pointe Claire, QC
Amy James, Granite City, IL
Stephanie Karadzhov, Pfafftown, NC
Mary Kilroe, Monroe, GA
Marie Kitchen, Hoschton, GA
Ingrid Koivukangas, Alchemy Farm, Salt Spring Island, BC
Laura Kolanowski, Sunnyside Drive Flowers, Crown Point, IN
Gretchen Langston, Laporte, CO
Lisa Lasch, Lake Geneva, WI
Sally Lewis, Linesville, PA
Kate Lietz, Little Red Organics, Free Soil, MI
Sarah Lutte, Farmingdale, ME
Sarah Marshall, Haven Botanicals, Birmingham, AL
Connie Masser, Scenic View Orchards, Sabillasville, MD
Myrica McCune, Old Peak Flowers, Philomath, OR
Claire McGee, Buds Cutting Gardens, Toronto, ON
Chris and Bob McLaughlin, Laughing Crow & Company, Somerset, CA
Elizabeth McLean, Butternut Creek Flowers, Kingston, ON
Laura Mewbourn, Feast and Flora Farm, Meggett, SC
Jennifer Milkey, Wisconsin Rapids, WI
Natalie Morgan, Tree House Flower Farm, Naselle, WA
George Morris, North East, PA
Rachel Morrison, A Tall Harvest, Carriere, MS
Emily Nekl, Fuggles Flowers, Camden, NC
Norma Nelsen, Up Start Berry Farm, Penn Yan, NY
Maureen Norton, The Portland Posy, Milwaukie, OR
Michael Passalacqua, Greenstone Fields, Berkeley Heights, NJ
Emily Patrick, Carolina Flowers, Marshall, NC
Heather Peterson, Sanbornton, NH
Debra Pflug, Alto, MI
Elizabeth Phillips, Walla Walla, WA
Dana Posten, Kansas City, MO
Kate Read, Lake Mary, FL
Peter Riley, Naselle, WA
Karen Roane, Milford, NH
Cheryl Roede, Jenison, MI
Daniel Rohrabaugh, Decatur, GA
Nicole Sauvageau, Rose Acres Farm, Weare, NH
Carrieann Schneider, Sideways Farm, Etowah, NC
John Schoenhals, Lorain County Ext., Elyria, OH
Gerry Schroeter, Franklinton, LA
Theresa Schumilas, Garden Party, St. Agatha, ON
C. Kathleen Seibold, Seibold Orchards, Traverse City, MI
Jessie V. Slayton, Hemlock Ridge Farm, Avoca, NY
Lorraine Stevenson, Carman, MB
Robert Swanekamp, Kube Pak Growers, Allentown, NJ
Alyssa Van Alstine, Liberty Plants, Philadelphia, PA
Christina Vanderbosch, The Little Farm On West Creek, Prattsburg, NY
Beverly Wagner, Livengood Farms, Eddy, TX
Lori Walker, Svedin's Nursery, Nampa, ID
Rosemary Walker, Vermilion, OH
Bronwyn Wheeler, Vertgen Farms, Qualicum Beach, BC
Susan Wood-Bohm, Hawthorne Ridge Heritage Farm, Douro-Dummer, ON
Connie Zeran, Beyond the Arbour, Lansdowne, ON

Thanks for the Good Word!

You connected some of our new members to the ASCFG!

Gretel and Steve Adams
Shannon Algiere
Chet Anderson
Frank and Pamela Arnosky
Julia Asherman
Nellie Ashmore
Erin Benzakein
Rebecca Bodicky
Stacy Brenner
Lynn Byczynski
Sue Ellen Claggett
Sarah Clarkson
Calvin Cook
Julie Cort
Darlene Cullen
Mimo Davis Duschack
Dave Delbo
Carolyn Dietzman
Diana Doll
Dave Dowling
Jill Elmers
Marci Fellenbaum
Melissa Fischbach
Ann Franzenburg
Ellen Frost
Paula Gilman
Jessica Hall
Wanda Hammel
Bernadette Hammelman
Melanie Harrington
Janis Harris
Jane Henderson
Amy Hirschfield
Mandy Hornick
Mike and Polly Hutchison
Barb Jewell
Heidi Joynt
Marc Kessler
Ko Klaver
Liz Krieg
Bev Lacey
Barbara Lamborne
Lennie Larkin
Carol Larsen
Deborah Lindell
Todd Lininger
Sas Long
Jennie Love
Jeanie McKewan
John McKeown
Natalie Morgan
Heidi Motz
Jeff Nameth
Suzy Neessen
Jennifer Nelson
Henk Onings
Karen Pendleton
Debra Prinzing
Andrea Racht
Deb Ramsay
Paula Rice
Nancy Richgruber
Gwen Sayers
Joe Schmitt
Rita Jo Shoultz
Gerard Smit
Paul Sorenson
Kate Sparks
Patricia Stern
Melinda Studinka
Doug Trott
Karen Volckhausen
Katie Vontz
Shannon Wallace
Chris Wien
Bob Wollam
Pressly Williams
Susan Wright
Kathy York
Lisa Ziegler
Gail Zorn

ASCFG Mentor Program Continues

After the success of its inaugural two-year session, the Mentor Program is ready for another round of matching new growers with veteran farmers.

The main goals of the program are to:

- Fast track younger or inexperienced growers through the learning phase of beginning flower farming. This will help ensure a more successful venture and build more quality growers.
- Build more successful growers which will make for more active and long-term ASCFG members. Qualified beginning farmers must be ASCFG members to participate.
- Engage older and more experienced growers by keeping them involved in the ASCFG and active within the cut flower movement.

Mentors will be matched with a newer grower for two years, to communicate via email and phone, and visit each other's farms at least once, sharing experiences and building a supportive relationship.

Some comments from mentees:
The mentorship program has definitely grown my confidence and skill set more in one year than I would have in three or four years on my own! Flowers are in the forefront of my farm business now.

I've taken the leap into higher-cost bulbs and perennials (poppies, lilies, tulips) sooner than I would have without extensive guidance from my mentor. I've also grown more flowers as a percentage of my total revenue than I would have dreamed of doing without this mentorship.

This program enhanced my confidence in running a farm because I realized that all my problems or issues were typical, and rather ordinary in the farming community. Having a mentor who also had experience with these bumps in the road gave me a boost of confidence in realizing that I am not the only one dealing with such problems.

If you'd like to apply for the program as a mentee, find the application at the ASCFG web site.

Grower Grants Awarded

Renee and Matt Clayton

Gretel and Steve Adams

Renee and Matt Clayton will investigate the impact of natural, organically-approved foliar sprays on the prevention of powdery mildew and other diseases on zinnia. In North Carolina, Wild Scallions Farm grows a diversified mix of flowers, fruits, and vegetables year-round for local markets. They provide a mix of field-grown flowers, woody stems, culinary herbs, and foraged flora, with a special interest in native flowers and ornamental edibles. With degrees in biomedical engineering (Renee) and chemical engineering (Matt), and backgrounds in science teaching for the Peace Corps, and research for the EPA, they will be well qualified to tackle some disease issues so important to cut flower growers.

Steam sterilization of soil is an agricultural practice that dates to the late 1800s as a means to manage both diseases and weed seeds present in soils. The application of hot steam destroys the harmful microorganisms such as fungi, bacteria, viruses, and weed seeds, without any chemical additions. Gretel and Steve Adams of Sunny Meadows Flower Farm in Columbus, Ohio believe that modern cut flower production would benefit from research of using a soil steamer as an organic pasteurization technique. Their objective is to find an alternative to both conventional and organic-certified chemical soil applications to address issues with Rhizoctonia that growers often face in winter greenhouse cut flower production.

Call for Nominations

Writing for *The Cut Flower Quarterly*. Planning and organizing national and regional meetings. Creating new programs and services for ASCFG members. These tasks and many more are accomplished by a volunteer Board of Directors. If you're grateful for the time and energy past Boards have donated to the ASCFG, help lighten the burden, and contribute by serving on the Board.

This summer you'll have the chance to run for North and Central Regional Director, or South and Central Regional Director; each is a three-year term. The North and Central Region includes Iowa, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. The South and Central Region encompasses Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas, and Utah.

For much more information and background, contact the ASCFG office. We'll be happy to fill you in!

Dave Dowling Scholarship Winners

Michael Del Valle

My interest in cut flower production has stemmed from witnessing the benefits I've reaped from choosing to include flowers in my life, and as a result, I want to help others in my community experience these joys by growing flowers commercially.

Michael Del Valle will graduate from the University of Georgia this December with a B.S. in horticulture. He has completed an internship at Sun Valley Floral Farms, and hopes to start his own cut flower company after he completes his education.

Drew Groezinger

I have always believed very strongly in service, and giving back. I've been able to combine these by teaching floral design classes and educational sessions in the floral and vegetable garden. I volunteer on a quarterly basis for the University of Illinois extension service, working with youth and adults.

Drew Groezinger is a sophomore at Highland Community College in Stockton, Illinois, and will move to the University of Wisconsin, Platteville, next year to complete his horticulture and agribusiness degree. He has a strong background in floriculture, public speaking, and community service.

Natalie Huntley

Working for sunny Meadows Flower Farm was one of the most influential things I have ever done for myself, both personally and professionally. I felt a sense of renewal as I quietly harvested flowers in the mornings in the open fields. Long hours were spent in the barn making bouquets, and creating wedding designs from flowers that were just picked.

Natalie Huntley majors in small-scale farming and ag business at North Carolina State University. At the same time, she grows flowers for her mother's florist shop, and to sell as bouquets at a local nursery.

Melinda Knuth

All of my research and experiences are in preparation for my future career path. My goals in the industry are to bring viable consumer behavior research and to teach young professionals about floral design.

Melinda Knuth is in her second semester of a doctoral program in horticulture at Texas A&M University. After varied experiences in floral design, laboratory research, and analysis of a commercial company's postharvest products, she working with Charles Hall on floral customers' perceptions of cut flowers.

Let's Talk Flowers, Eh?

August 7 & 8, 2017

Niagara Region, Ontario Canada

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

Tours of Green Park Nurseries,
Wendalane Farms and La Primavera Farms

Two days of presentations by some of Ontario's finest flower farmers

Topics include farmers' market sales, social media wedding contract and design demonstration, and production of peonies, ranunculus, and anemone

Includes a summer evening BBQ dinner

Register at www.ascfg.org

Optional Day 3 tour of the Ontario Flower Growers Auction in Mississauga

Drop-in tours at flower farms along the driving route

CASABLANCA
WINERY INN
Gateway to Elegance

A block of rooms has been reserved for the ASCFG at the Casablanca Winery Inn in Grimsby. To make a reservation, please call (905) 309-7171 or (877) 446-5746 before the cutoff date of Thursday, July 6 at 12:00 noon.

Let's Talk Flowers, Eh?

Monday, August 7 and Tuesday, August 8
Ridgeville, Wellandport, and Dundas, Ontario

Attendance for this event is limited to 75.

Monday, August 7

9:00 – 11:00 a.m.
Tour Green Park Nurseries
430 Metler Road, Ridgeville

11:15 – 12:00 p.m.
Virtual tour of Green Park's other farms

12:00 – 1:00 p.m.
Lunch (included with registration fee)

1:00 – 1:45 p.m.
Woodies: Which Ones Should I Grow and How Long Before I Can Sell Them?
Karl Vahrmeyer Jr., Green Park Nurseries

1:45 – 2:30 p.m.
Anemone and Ranunculus Production
Kees Van Schaik

2:30 – 3:00 p.m.
Break

3:00 – 3:45 p.m.
A New Model for Urban Farming
Sarah Nixon, My Luscious Backyard

3:45 – 4:30 p.m.
Perfect Peony Production
Bill DeReus, L.M. Bolle & Sons, Norwich

6:00 p.m.
Meet in lobby of Casablanca Winery Inn for evening activities, planned by attendees via social networking.

Tuesday, August 8

9:00 - 9:45 a.m.
Tour Wendalane Farms
5998 Canborough Road, Wellandport

9:45 – 10:30 a.m.
Farmers' Markets Veterans
Jenn Feddema and Bob Gerryt, Wendalane Farms

10:45 – 11:30 a.m.
Make Your Social Media Accounts Bloom!
Melanie Harrington, Dahlia May Flower Farm, Trenton

11:30 – 1:30 p.m.
Lunch on your own

1:30 p.m.
La Primavera Farms
221 Middletown Road, Dundas

2:00 – 2:45 p.m.
Wanna Do "I Do's", But How?
Jessica Dreyer, Fleurish Design Studio, Niagara

3:00 – 3:45 p.m.
Floral Design Demonstration
Carole Charbonneau, Flower Town, Sudbury

3:45 – 4:30 p.m.
Toronto Flower Market - An Overview
Natasa Kajganic, Market Manager

4:30 – 5:15 p.m.
Self-guided Walking Tour of La Primavera Farms

5:30 – 8:00 p.m.
BBQ Dinner at La Primavera Farms

Wednesday, August 9

Optional on-your-own tour of the Ontario Flower Growers Auction
10:00 a.m.

From the DIRECTOR

Judy M. Laushman

We've been encouraging members to address their nearby garden clubs, Master Gardeners, and anyone interested in learning more about local flowers. Recently, we took our own advice, and Linda Twining and I traveled to Huron, Ohio for a meeting hosted by the OSU extension service.

After a brief PowerPoint introduction to the ASCFG, we showed our documentary "Local Flowers—Local Farmers". I have lost track of how many times I've seen this film, but I was impressed all over again with our members' passion for their farms, their flowers, and their industry. Kudos and thank you to Josie Crowson for having the inspiration to create this project, and finding the filmmakers who brought it to life so perfectly.

As wonderful as it was to watch it, even more gratifying was to hear and see the reaction of those in the audience as they watched it. I'm sure few (okay, none) of them have seen an overhead view of beautiful fields of cut flowers in Virginia or Pennsylvania or Texas, or an endless range of hoophouses in Lancaster County. They probably don't know any florists like Ellen Frost who use strictly locally-grown flowers.

They hadn't thought about the difference in fragrance, variety, or the lasting vase life of flowers grown just down the road, rather than flown in on jets. The oohs and aahs, and sometimes downright gasps of awe as our members' flowers filled the screen were proof that an appreciation of what makes our flowers different truly exists.

Our next demonstration featured another page from Josie's playbook. Gretel Adams had sent us a gorgeous bouquet from Sunny Meadows Flower Farm in Columbus. It included bright anemone and ranunculus, fragrant stock and freesia, scented geranium foliage and flowers, and perfectly formed cymbidium orchids. On our way to Huron, we picked up a couple standard grocery store bouquets. We had to buy two to make the size comparable to Gretel's lush combination. Mums, filler fern, two asters, and a lone stem of hypericum made up each of those designs.

We held these out to the audience, and Linda asked them to tell us which one had been grown in Ohio. "Not the one with the orchids." someone confidently stated from the front row. "There is so much variety in that one," another attendee said. "How do you have that this early in the year in this part of the country?"

After our talk, the organizers raffled off the designs as door prizes. The difference between the delight of the woman lucky enough to win Gretel's design compared to the stoicism of those who took home the grocery store bouquets was striking.

The attendees of this meeting were not high-end florists, or, likely, frequent customers of those florists. These were farmers and gardeners, from the middle of the country, who came to that meeting to educate themselves not only about melon and garlic production, but about what's new with succulents, and alternatives to typical garden pesticides. They want to learn more about what's available.

These are the consumers we need to reach with our local flowers message.

To that end, the ASCFG is launching a promotional program to continue to spread the word that locally-grown flowers are available, and that they are better. We are partnering with a marketing company in a communications campaign designed to inspire consumers to seek out and buy locally-grown flowers. The first components of this project are to develop a logo and a consumer-facing website. The logo would be simple, eye-catching and easily understood, and would be used in all ASCFG materials promoting local flowers. Members could use the logo on their website, Facebook pages, bouquet sleeves, etc. The consumer-facing website will feature an easy-to-use flower and member search so that consumers can find flowers near them, plus stories, videos, and photographs from member growers and designers that help educate the public about local flowers. The website will become our prime tool for spreading the message about local flowers.

As with all projects of this magnitude, it will take to time to develop and confirm specifics to the satisfaction of all involved; this won't happen overnight.

Afraid that your membership dues are likely to increase to cover this campaign? Nope. Through careful stewardship of the organization's funds, these projects will be completed at no extra cost to members.

We'll be getting back to you soon with details. In the meantime, share your copy of "Local Flowers—Local Farmers", make a bouquet of your fresh flowers, and help us spread the word!

Order from these ASCFG Supplier Members!

Association of Specialty Cut Flower Growers

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www.HeadstartNursery.com

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